

## IN THE CLAIMS:

1. (Currently Amended) A memory controller for accessing a memory having a plurality of physical blocks each constituted of a plurality of pages based on a host address supplied from a host computer, comprising:

search means for searching, ~~referencing based on~~ start page data written in a redundant area of a physical block including a target page designated by the host address, a number of a start page of the physical block where the start page indicates a page, a preceding page thereof ~~not being~~ not a free page and all following pages among the pages included in the corresponding physical block being free pages, ~~wherein free pages are searched within a physical block;~~

decision means responsive to a request to write user data issued by the host computer for determining whether progressive data writing for writing user data to a user area of the target page designated by the host address is possible; and

write means responsive to an affirmative determination by the decision means for writing user data to the user area of the target page without performing an inter-block data transfer,

wherein the decision means makes the decision that progressive data writing is possible if the number of the target page is equal to or greater than that of the start page.

2. (Canceled)

3. (Currently Amended) The memory controller as claimed in claim 1, wherein the write means writes new start page data to a redundant area at least a part of new free page ~~information~~ resulting from writing user data to at least one page included in the physical block which includes the target page.

4. – 16. (Canceled)

17. (Currently Amended) A flash memory system comprising a flash memory having a plurality of physical blocks each constituted of a plurality of pages and a memory controller for accessing the flash memory based on a host address supplied from a host computer, the memory controller comprising:

search means for searching, ~~referencing based on~~ start page data written in a redundant area of a physical block including a target page designated by the host address, a number of a start page of the physical block where the start page indicates a page, a preceding page thereof

~~not-being not~~ a free page and all following pages among the pages included in the corresponding physical block being free pages, ~~wherein free pages are searched within a physical block;~~

decision means responsive to a request to write user data issued by the host computer for determining whether progressive data writing for writing user data to a user area of the target page designated by the host address is possible; and

write means responsive to an affirmative determination by the decision means for writing user data to the user area of the target page without performing an inter-block data transfer,

wherein the decision means makes the decision that progressive data writing is possible if the number of the target page is equal to or greater than that of the start page.

18. (Currently Amended) The flash memory system as claimed in claim 17, wherein the write means writes new start page data to a redundant area resulting from writing user data to at least one page included in the physical block which includes the target page.

19. (Canceled)

20. (Currently Amended) A method for controlling a flash memory, comprising:  
a search step means for searching, ~~referencing based on~~ start page data written in a redundant area of a physical block including a target page designated by the host address, a number of a start page of the physical block where the start page indicates a page, a preceding page thereof ~~not-being not~~ a free page and all following pages among the pages included in the corresponding physical block being free pages, ~~wherein free pages are searched within a physical block;~~

a determining step conducted in response to a request to write user data issued by a host computer of determining whether progressive data writing for writing user data to a user area of the target page designated by the host address is possible; and

a writing step conducted in response to an affirmative determination in the determining step of writing user data to the user area of the target page without performing an inter-block data transfer;

wherein the determining step determines that progressive data writing is possible if the number of the target page is equal to or greater than that of the start page.